

Appendix 3

Review of Wellington City Council Parking Policies Bullen Consultancy 2006

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

There are a number of factors that have an influence on parking strategies within a Central Business District. These include:

- Impact on the commercial and retail activity
- Servicing of the commercial and retailing buildings
- Availability of public transport
- Traffic movement and congestion
- Accident prevention
- Payment and pricing of parking space
- Environmental issues, e.g. noise and air quality
- Enforcement issues
- Ability to implement an adopted strategy

Overseas there has been an ongoing and increasing trend since the early 1970's to integrate these elements into an overall "transportation" policy within central areas. The number of car parks combined with parking controls and pricing are perceived to be a vital element in the success or otherwise of such policies.

The main conclusions of this study are that in Wellington:

- There is a 'Transport Strategy' in place but it does not link the number or control of car parks with other associated policies.
- The effectiveness of associated policies e.g. SaferRoads, public transport (bus lanes), central area retailing, relies to a significant extent on the parking numbers and operating policies in place.

With minimal intervention by the City Council the existing parking regimes are being driven almost exclusively by market forces. Although not conforming to worldwide practices, in Wellington this is proving to be effective in the outcome of other policies. The existing market driven operation of the central area parking stock, on and off street, public and private, appears to be operating more efficiently and effectively when compared with similar regimes overseas.

The level of fees on street is presently close to the internationally accepted optimum level where some 15% of spaces are available for use at times of high demand, thus enabling most people to find a parking space close to their destination when required.

The on-street fee payment systems are among the best to be found in the world and Wellington would be one of the world leaders in this respect.

The number of off-street parking spaces available for public all day parking being provided by private operators at market prices compares favourably with other cities, given that there are also good public transport facilities available in Wellington.

The number of private non-residential car parks (PNR) (car parks provided on site for employees/visitors) is less than available in Christchurch, Auckland and generally in the USA. This shortfall in Wellington is accommodated by the number of public all day car parks available and the public transport facilities.

Many cities world wide implement resident parking schemes around the CBD to prevent undue numbers of commuters parking in these areas. Wellington was one of the earliest cities (mid 1980's) to adopt this approach.

There are an ever increasing number of cities as part of their overall strategy for central area traffic movements, and environmental concern providing park and ride facilities on the edge of the city. There are limited opportunities for this within Wellington City although the Regional Council has been pro-active in providing park and ride facilities at many of the rail stations within Wellington City, and the regional suburban rail network.

More recently Wellington City has implemented 'Coupon' parking areas on the fringes of the CBD where 'park and walk' is the predominant feature. It has not been possible to pin point a comparable situation elsewhere. Observation of the existing coupon scheme suggests that it would be possible to bring about improvement that would maintain and enhance the existing CBD parking regime. A review is recommended.

In preparing this report reference has been made to numerous reports, studies and literature worldwide regarding parking policies, strategies and best practice. The one common theme and universal agreement is that parking policy needs to be embedded in the overall transport policy for a city.

The Council has in place a Transport Strategy (2004) that includes references to parking and other related elements. The "required actions" included in the strategy are too vague. What is needed is to translate the parking (and other elements) of the Transport Strategy into an 'Action Plan' with defined outcomes and targets consistent with the overall objective. It is not clear from the Transport Strategy (2004) what the overall objectives are for parking.

Parking policy usually takes one of two forms:

- (i) Market driven – as in Wellington. Elsewhere in NZ, Australia and USA there is some intervention usually to the detriment of other public transport and environmental policies.
- (ii) Constrained as is the case in the UK and Europe and parking is controlled to accommodate other issues, such as traffic movements, public transport, environmental and pedestrian accident concerns.

Worldwide case studies have concluded that car parking is not a major factor in determining the relative attractiveness of a city area for shopping. There is also evidence to suggest that an oversupply of parking detracts from a centre and deters people due to traffic congestion, noise, pollution and pleasantness of shopping.

Chapter 7 discusses this issue with particular regard to the present 'free' on-street parking at the weekends and in the evenings. This chapter also discusses the impact that the increasing number of central area residents may be having on the availability of on-street parking in the evenings and weekends. It is suggested that the time periods for payment for on-street parking could be extended to include evenings and weekends.

The conclusions of this study confirm the view expressed in the Transport Strategy that "the transport system is currently operating effectively. Wellington has low levels of congestion compared to other cities and high levels of travel by public transport and walking"

The number of car parks and their operation play a vital role in the transport system and the importance of this role is understated and perhaps not fully understood in the Transport Strategy document.

The overall conclusion of this study is that the existing market driven parking regime in the CBD, private and public, is performing well in meeting the parking demands. While the parking regime appears to be operating independently from the vision set out in Transport Strategy (2004) in practice it is complementing other related policies. The following chapters expand on why this may be so. Chapter 8 suggests ways in which the Council could consider intervention to assist in maintaining and enhancing the existing parking regime.

A number of recommendations are contained in Section 10 of the report as follows:

- (i) A review is carried out into the effectiveness and possible refinement of the coupon parking scheme.
- (ii) A full review be carried out of the residents parking scheme to consider what, if any, changes may be necessary in both the extent of the scheme and operational practices.

- (iii) That consideration is given to the removal of up to 5% of on-street metered parking space to provide for additional loading zones/taxi ranks/bus lanes.
- (iv) That the on street parking fees are adjusted periodically to maintain a vacancy rate of 15% or so during the periods of high demand.
- (v) That consideration is given to using surplus parking revenues to progress the 'Transport Strategy' objective to provide additional 'park and ride' facilities in the suburban areas.
- (vi) Parking fees in the outer CBD are reviewed as they may be set too high to achieve the optimum occupancy.
- (vii) Consideration is given to improving accessibility to the CBD at weekends and in the evenings by:
 - extending the time restricted metered areas
 - payment for evening and weekend parking
- (viii) That consideration is given to amending the Central Area plan rule for the provision of car parks for new developments.
- (ix) Any review of the 'Transport Strategy' should include a greater acknowledgement of the role that the number of car parks and their control has in ensuring the effectiveness of other related policies.